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Declaration of Omar Gonzalez-Pagan in support of
Motion to Exclude Expert Testimony of Dr. Paul R. McHugh
Kadel v. Folwell, No. 1:19-cv-00272-LCB-LPA (M.D.N.C.)

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OP-ED **OPINION**

Hopkins faculty disavow 'troubling' report on gender and sexuality

By CHRIS BEYRER, ROBERT W. BLUM and TONIA C. POTEAT
SEP 28, 2016 AT 10:55 AM

**FEEDBACK**

Respect is the cornerstone of university life: respect for speech and a diversity of views; respect for students, colleagues and patients; and respect for science, which is our lifeblood as an institution.

As faculty at Johns Hopkins, a major educational, research and health institution, we are writing to express our concern about a recently published [report](#) that we believe mischaracterizes the current state of the science on sexuality and gender.

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Science, and particularly the fields of psychiatry and psychology, has made major advances in our understanding of the complex issues of sexual orientation and gender identity. For instance, accumulating data support the concept that gender identity is not strictly a binary phenomenon. And scientific evidence clearly documents that sexual and romantic attractions to people of the same and/or different sexes are normal variations of the diversity of human sexuality.

Homosexuality is no longer considered an illness by the American Psychiatric Association, the American Psychological Association, the American Medical Association or any of the other mainstream professional organizations in the health field. These organizations have come to affirm what LGBTQ people and their loved ones have known for years: that being gay or transgender is perfectly consistent with being healthy and well.

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Yet LGBTQ communities have been subject to discrimination, including in health care services. A 2011 landmark report by the Institute of Medicine (IOM) reviewed this history of maltreatment and affirmed that substantial health disparities exist for LGBTQ people, most often fueled by stigma, discrimination and homophobia. This key IOM report outlines an important research agenda in the field, and we are learning more each day about gender, gender identity, and transgender and gender-nonconforming people and their well-being — including best practices for gender-affirming services.

As faculty at Johns Hopkins, we are committed to serving the health needs of the LGBTQ community in a manner that is informed by the best available science — a manner that is respectful and inclusive and supports the rights of LGBTQ people to live full and open lives without fear of discrimination or bias based on their sexual orientation or gender identity.

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That is why the recent report, released by one current and one former member of our faculty on the topic of LGBTQ health, is so troubling. The report, "Sexuality and Gender: Findings from the Biological and Psychological and Social Sciences," was not published in the scientific literature, where it would have been subject to rigorous peer review prior to publication. It purports to detail the science of this area, but it falls short of being a comprehensive review.

For instance, the report omits post-2010 work by Dr. Mark Hatzenbuehler of Columbia University and thereby underemphasizes the negative role that stigma and oppression play in LGBTQ mortality and health behaviors. It comes to different conclusions about complex questions such as the origins of homosexuality from those reached by a recent review of the scientific literature by psychologist Dr. J. Michael Bailey and colleagues, commissioned by the prestigious Association for Psychological Science. As now stated, the report's findings could further stigmatize and harm the health of LGBTQ communities, and the report is already being widely touted by organizations opposed to LGBTQ rights.

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Because of the report, the Human Rights Campaign has warned Johns Hopkins that it is reviewing, and may remove from the institution, its high ranking in the HRC Healthcare Equality Index. The national benchmarking tool evaluates health care facilities' policies and practices related to equity and inclusion of their LGBTQ patients, visitors and employees.

We wish to make clear that there are many people at Hopkins who hold a profound and long-standing commitment to the health, wellness, well-being, and fair and non-stigmatizing treatment of LGBTQ people and communities. We do not believe that the "Sexuality and Gender" report cited above is a comprehensive portrayal of the current science, and we respectfully disassociate ourselves from its findings.

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We also vigorously support the right to academic freedom and scientific disagreement and debate. Indeed, debates are the very basis of the scientific method. That same commitment to scientific debate means we must engage the dialogue in a circumstance such as this, and not stand silently by.

This summer's tragic events in Orlando reminded all of us of the virulence of the oppression of LGBTQ people. We stand with the LGBTQ community, and with their allies, for dignity, inclusion and the recognition that homophobia and transphobia have no place in our institutions. Respect requires no less from all of us.

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Topics: Medical Research, Human Rights Campaign, Columbia University

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